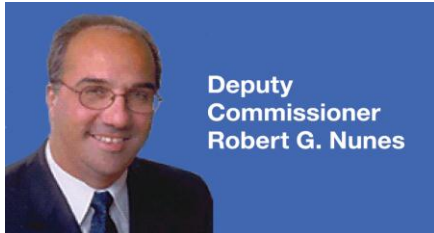


City and Town - March 7th, 2013

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City & Town

Amy Pitter, Commissioner • Robert G. Nunes, Deputy Commissioner & Director of Municipal Affairs



Deputy
Commissioner
Robert G. Nunes

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DOR 360



City & Town is published by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services (DLS) and is designed to address matters of interest to local officials.

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Taking the Pulse of Stakeholders

Earlier this week, a newly formed DLS Stakeholder Satisfaction Committee met for the first time in what will be a continuous effort to formalize the process for taking the pulse of DLS stakeholders through the regular issuance of surveys and reviews of program evaluations.

The creation of this committee reflects our commitment at DLS to stay in communication with local government officials in order to identify processes and policies that maximize our efficiency, deliver better services and improve your experience in working with DLS. The committee's work will also contribute to development of the DLS FY14 Strategic Plan.

DLS has issued three surveys in recent months. The survey results will be available for your review on our DLS homepage as of Monday -- just click on the survey icon. As DLS issues more surveys, those too will be published online.

One of those surveys of auditors and accountants regarding possible improvements to Schedule A was the subject of an article in the December 2012 *City and Town* written by IT Director Dave Davies. Work is ongoing to revise Schedule A, and we will be getting back to you

when those revisions are complete.

The other two surveys were issued in January. Both dealt with the recently concluded FY13 tax rate setting season and were done through a third-party program in order to allow for anonymous responses.

One was sent to assessors in the 106 communities which went through the triennial property valuation certification process in FY13. 69 responses were received. The surveys included both rating and open-ended questions designed to solicit comment, and I was pleased to see that local assessors took the opportunity to make their opinions known.

The other survey, sent at the same time in January, was directed at 450 accountants, auditors and finance directors and received 169 responses. Again, the unfiltered responses this survey generated will be useful as DLS prepares its FY14 Strategic Plan.

DLS staff received the survey results earlier this week, which should help to generate considerable internal discussion during our Strategic Plan development meetings scheduled in the coming weeks.

We believe that making these comments, both supportive and critical, available to our stakeholders in the local government community will air issues that need attention and will send a very strong signal that DLS is dedicated to transparent stakeholder communication and improving our performance.

The creation and formalization of a Stakeholder Satisfaction Committee fits neatly under the umbrella of DOR Commissioner Amy Pitter's DOR 360 initiative to continually connect and engage with the department's many stakeholders while honestly sharing ideas and concerns.

So you will be hearing from us from time to time. We promise to report back to you the findings of our surveys, what we take away from the surveys, and what we propose to do as a result. As we do this, we'll be looking for your feedback and comments, and we'll create a special email box for just that purpose. We are also in the

process of creating a Stakeholder Bill of Rights.

I want to thank those who have participated in our recent surveys, and invite others who may receive them in the future to respond and let us know how we are doing and what we can do to improve.

Robert G. Nunes
Deputy Commissioner and Director of Municipal Affairs
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DLS and DOER Partner to Shine Light on Solar Assessment

Bob Bliss - Director of Strategic Planning and Worcester and Springfield Office Manager

Nearly 300 public and private sector attendees participated in three workshops last week to learn about valuation of solar photovoltaic (PV) projects for the purpose of taxation or for negotiating a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreement.

Sponsored jointly by DOR's Division of Local Services and the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), the workshops drew local assessors as well as a smattering of individuals who work in the development of PV projects.

The nearly four-hour workshops, led by George E. Sansoucy, P.E., and Glenn Walker, were held in Boston and Shrewsbury on Feb. 26 and in Springfield on Feb. 27. Sansoucy's engineering and appraisal firm specializes in the valuation and financial feasibility of special purpose

properties and consults on regulatory matters.

The workshops were organized by the DLS Bureau of Local Assessment and were funded with a grant from DOER.

Massachusetts has seen an explosion in PV development driven largely by government regulations requiring utilities in states that have adopted solar carve-outs to supply a portion of their electricity from solar systems.

Sansoucy frankly admitted that these 21st Century means of electrical generation have outstripped the 20th Century law used to value conventional sources of power generation, and noted there are currently nine bills filed in the state legislature that deal with the valuation of PV projects.

The workshop materials presented were in draft, and are now open for comment from those who attended. DLS will publish a final copy of Sansoucy's presentation on its website after comments are received and incorporated. Media coverage of the event can be found [here](#).

DLS Announces Spring Course 101 Registration Now Available

Seminars, Workshops and Trainings

The Division of Local Services is pleased to announce that the basic course for assessors, "Assessment Administration: Law, Procedures and Valuation" (also known as Course 101) will be held in Boston this spring at 100 Cambridge Street. The course will be held over three Mondays in April (April 8th, 22nd and 29th) from 9am to 4:30pm.

Advanced registration is required as space is limited. Questions and requests for further information can be sent to dlsregistration@dor.state.ma.us.

The registration form can be found at:
<http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/training-and-seminars/course101/>

How to Use Statewide Contracts Training: Available On Demand!

**Kristine Resendes - Operational Services
Division Communications Manager**

The Operational Services Division (OSD) is available to conduct onsite trainings free of charge on how to utilize and to purchase from Statewide Contracts to save your organization time and money. Over 137 Statewide Contracts offer a variety of goods and services, from office supplies to lab equipment; you will no doubt find many items you currently purchase at a much lower rate.

If you have at least ten people in your office or department that would be interested in learning how to use Statewide Contracts, we'd be happy to conduct a training onsite for no charge! This training can also be offered during an existing program, such as a monthly or annual meeting or other special event or as a stand-alone program.

For one hour of your time, you and your co-workers will learn:

- How to Understand Statewide Contracts
- Comm-PASS Overview
- How to determine if an item is on a Statewide Contract
- About additional savings available when using Statewide Contracts
- How to take advantage of the Surplus Property Program

For more information or to request an onsite training, please email: osdtraining@state.ma.us. To download an Onsite Training Request Form, please click [here](#).

March Municipal Calendar

1	DOR/MDM-TAB	Notification of Cherry Sheet Estimates for the Following Year (pending action taken by the Legislature) The Cherry Sheet is an estimate of: 1) Receipts - local reimbursement and assistance programs as authorized by law
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		and appropriated by the General Court; and 2) Assessments - state and county assessments and charges to local governments. All amounts listed on the Cherry Sheet are estimates. Actual receipts and charges are determined based on detailed formulas or guidelines for each program. Cherry Sheets are posted on the DLS website and updated at each juncture of the state budget process.
1	Personal Property Owner	Submit Form of List This is a listing of all personal property filed by the owner with the Assessors each year for the purpose of determining taxes in the next fiscal year. The return is due on or before March 1, but the deadline may be extended by the Assessors to a date no later than the date abatement applications are due.
1	Charitable Organization	Submit 3ABC Forms This is a return of property held for charitable purposes filed by a charitable organization with the Assessors each year in order to be eligible for exemption from taxation for the next fiscal year. The return is due on or before March 1, but the deadline may be extended by the Assessors to a date no later than the date abatement applications are due.
1	DOR/BLA	Filing Deadline for Telecommunications Forms of List
31	State Treasurer	Notification of Quarterly Local Aid Payment on or Before March 31